

Horses on the Tonto National Forest
Update from Forest Supervisor Neil Bosworth

Phoenix (June 11, 2012) -- There is apparently misinformation circulating on the internet and in the media that there is to be a “roundup” and “slaughter” of horses on the Tonto National Forest. We have been contacted by many people to express their concerns and would like to reassure them:

There is no formalized plan for managing the horses on the forest. Forest specialists are still gathering information and looking at all options.

No plan will be fully formalized until data gathering has been completed and options for herd management fully explored.

A multi-agency working group was formed in 2011 to effectively manage the growing horse population on the forest which is posing increased safety hazards to both horses and human visitors. During their initial meetings, the group focused directly on researching a contraception program which was being effectively used by the Salt River Pima Indian Community for horse herd management. That community’s program is considered a benchmark to evaluate the possible success of a contraception program for the forest horses.

After this year’s wildfire season is over, it is planned that the group will continue meeting as forest specialists continue to gather information, such as what size the herd is, what the age and gender count is, etc.

In the meantime, many of our employees are currently assigned to wildfire incidents (and have been, since May).

It will be a while – probably the fall – before we can return to gathering information and exploring options on this topic. We ask for your patience and support as we concentrate right now on keeping Arizona safe from wildfire dangers.

And on that note, I want to point out that the forest increased its fire restrictions at 8 am Friday, and to remind you that fireworks are prohibited on the forest at all times.

Thank you for your interest in the Tonto National Forest –

Neil Bosworth, Forest Supervisor